Dennis' 7 Dees

Growing Citrus in the Pacific Northwest

Citrus plants have shiny, evergreen leaves, fragrant flowers, and attractive fruits that hang for months. Although it's not ideal to grow large citrus trees in the ground in our climate, it is possible to enhance a sunny area with a potted dwarf citrus plant. The fruits produced on container-grown citrus are the same size as those from a full-grown citrus tree, and they are just as delicious!

CITRUS SELECTION

- **Some citrus plants are more cold-resistant** than others, though all citrus can be damaged by frost.
- **Best Citrus varieties for the PNW:**
  - » *Improved Meyer Lemon*
  - » *Variegated Pink Lemon*
  - » *Bearss Seedless Lime*
  - » *Navel Orange*
  - » *Moro Blood Orange*
  - » *Satsuma Mandarin*
  - » *Owari Orange*
  - » *Paradisi Rio Red Grapefruit*
  - » *Variegated Kumquat*
- **Choose sturdy, nursery-raised plants** with only a few fruits and flowers; they'll have stronger tops and better root development.

SUNLIGHT

- **Citrus does best in full sun;** at least 6–8 hours of direct sunlight daily. High light levels promote blooming and fruit development.
- **Use grow lights** for 12 hours per day if kept in dark area indoors during the winter.

WATER

- **Water thoroughly** until water runs out of the bottom of the pot.
- **Let soil dry down 2–3 inches** between waterings.
- **Water less** in winter.
- **Never wait until the leaves wilt** to water; the stress can cause developing fruit to drop, and prolonged drought causes leaf drop and may even kill the plant.

FERTILIZER

- **When:** Fertilize in Spring and Summer prior to the flush of new growth, and again in late August; do not feed in Winter.
- **What:** Feed with organic acid fertilizer such as **G&B Citrus & Fruit Tree Fertilizer** or **G&B Rhododendron, Azalea & Camellia Fertilizer**—both are organic, probiotic, people and pet safe, and feed for several months.

TEMPERATURE

- **Citrus plants can be grown outdoors** in the Pacific Northwest almost year-round and most are hardy to Zone 9.
- **For winter protection**, move potted plants close to house, out of wind and rain; water as needed. If temps drop below 28°F, bring plants into more protected area like garage or mud room.
- **In Fall, citrus can be brought indoors** to a cool, bright location.
- **If indoors, keep away from fireplaces & heat vents.** Citrus lose leaves in heat or with sudden changes in temperature, humidity, or light; foliage grows back when environment stabilizes.
- **In Spring, bring citrus plants back outside.** Place in morning sun and afternoon shade—as plants acclimate to sun, they can be gradually moved to a full sun location.

PRUNING & POTTING

- **Dwarf citrus can be pruned any time** to keep the plant compact and bushy; unpruned plants can grow 6–8 feet.
- **If needed, repot** in early spring into a slightly larger container every 3 years or so; citrus plants prefer being rootbound to encourage blooming; smaller containers help to prevent root rot due to overwatering.
- **Don't want to repot into larger container?** Treat as a bonsai: Remove plant from pot, trim some top growth and roots, add fresh potting soil (**G&B Palm, Cactus & Citrus Planting Mix** or **G&B Acid Planting Mix**), and replant in same size pot.

PESTS & DISEASE

- **A few pests are common** to citrus plants, especially indoors: aphids, spider mites, mealybaugs, scale
- **Prevention is key**—inspect plants often to catch problems early; spray monthly with horticultural oil or clean leaves with alcohol solution; look for sticky honeydew as an indicator of insects.
- **If pests are present**, use insecticidal soap, horticultural oil, neem oil, or Spinosad for treatment.
- **Fungal diseases** are a symptom of overwatering and water should be reduced to diminish issues.

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